

Week Ending Friday, August 10, 2001

The President's Radio Address

August 4, 2001

Good morning. This week in Washington we made dramatic progress on health care, and today I want to extend that progress one step further.

On Wednesday I shook hands with Representative Charlie Norwood of Georgia, agreeing to strong patient protection legislation. Representative Norwood is the chief congressional champion of that issue. And together, we broke 6 years of legislative gridlock.

The next day the House of Representatives, based on our agreement, passed a good bill to give patients the care they deserve without encouraging frivolous lawsuits. The legislation protects every patient in all 50 States when a health plan wrongly denies or delays needed care. Patients are guaranteed a quick independent review of their case and new Federal remedies to hold their health plans accountable. They get a strong new set of rights in our health care system without driving up the cost of health insurance and discouraging employers from offering coverage.

This legislation is welcome news for patients. And I want to continue this momentum. Today I'm announcing a new initiative to expand health insurance for the uninsured by making the Medicaid program more accessible. Medicaid is designed to provide low income Americans with medical insurance. It has a noble purpose and some serious challenges.

Medicaid spending is rising dramatically, but the number of low income Americans without insurance remains high. Clearly, this important program needs reform. Yet, States have great difficulty reforming their Medicaid programs because of complex and cumbersome Federal requirements. It is hard for States—much too hard—to navigate the con-

fusing and inconsistent Federal approval process.

Today we are changing that. My administration will adopt new rules that empower States to propose reforms tailored to the needs of their citizens. We will act on proposals quickly without making States wait for months or years for an answer.

In return for this flexibility, we will ask the States to help ensure that their programs broaden coverage for low income Americans. When States are free to try new approaches, the results are encouraging. Just a few months ago, New York State, led by George Pataki, asked for and got permission to try a new idea to cover more people with the same dollars. As a result, as many as 619,000 more New Yorkers will soon have health insurance.

In our new system, we will inform States in advance of the criteria for responsible Medicaid reform. If they meet those conditions, the Federal Government stands ready to help expand health insurance coverage to those who need it most—no uncertainty and no runaround.

The goals of Medicaid are too important to get bogged down in a bureaucracy. My administration cares about results, about getting Americans broader and better medical coverage. And on issues from Medicaid to patient protection, we are seeing results for the American people.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 10:55 a.m. on August 3 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on August 4. In his address, the President referred to Gov. George E. Pataki of New York. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 3 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to a Round of Golf in Waco, Texas

August 7, 2001

President's Vacation

Q. What are you doing?

The President. It's nice to be home, for starters. This is my home; this is where I intend to live after I'm the President. It's good to be back with the people who elected me the Governor of Texas. I'm working a lot of issues, national security matters. I've got some decisions to make—as you know, working on immigration policy, state visit with the President of Mexico.

But I'm getting a lot done, and it's good to be on my ranch. It's good to be home.

Stem Cell Research

Q. Any closer on stem cell research decision?

The President. I'll be making that decision when—I'll be making that announcement when I'm ready to make the announcement.

President's Vacation

Q. How do you deal with the heat here in this area? It's awfully hot.

The President. This is Texas. I know a lot of you wish you were in the East Coast, lounging on the beaches, sucking in the salt air, but when you're from Texas and love Texas, this is where you come home; this is my home. We built a house in the Crawford area; it'll be the house where I live in for the rest of my life. I like my own home, and I don't mind the heat—

Q. Are you taking any naps in the afternoon, sir?

The President. —as a matter of fact, I'm going to get Stretch [Richard Keil, Bloomberg News] to come and run with me.

Q. Any time you're ready.

The President. Want to go for a heat run?

Q. Sure. How about this afternoon?

The President. It may be a little too hot, Stretch.

Q. Are you taking any naps in the afternoon, sir?

The President. I'm working, enjoying myself, getting a lot done on the ranch, too. One of the things I find to be, you know, helpful,

is to get outdoors. Washington, DC, is a fine place, and I'm honored to be working in the Oval Office, staying in the compound there, but I'm the kind of person that needs to get outdoors. I like to be outdoors; I like to work outdoors. It keeps my mind whole; it keeps my spirits up. I think it's important for people to get outside and to work.

And I'm making a lot of improvements on the ranch, and I find that to be—I find that to be a good part of keeping me a balanced person.

I'm reading a lot. I just finished "In the Heart of the Sea," by Philbrick. It's a book about the whaler *Essex*. It's a really interesting book. Now I'm into the Adams book by McCullough.

Q. How do you like it?

The President. I like it.

Q. I heard it's a good read.

The President. It is a good read. It's an interesting book. I'm particularly paying attention to that part about John Quincy Adams. You might remember, Quincy and I have got something in common.

Q. How does the heat here compare to the heat of Washington, politically? [Laughter]

The President. Politically? Well, I'm amongst friends in Texas. I think the people of Texas know me; they know what I'm like; they know I can make decisions; they know I'm a person who stands on principles. I really don't worry about polls or focus groups; I do what I think is right. And so there's no political heat here. I'm amongst friends, and it doesn't matter whether they're Democrats or Republicans here in Texas. The people and I got along really well. In Washington, it's a lot more partisan. People up there just like to dig in and fight. You know, Bob Bullock and I showed that you don't have to fight to get things done. Bob Bullock was the old Democratic Lieutenant Governor.

And I think eventually, over time, if I stay persistent, that we'll erode that intransigence in Washington, DC—you know, where people say, "Let's try to score political points; let's don't try to come together and work for what's right." But we'll see. We made a lot of progress the first 6 months—a lot more than a lot of people thought we could do.

Yes, Stretch?